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PLATONISM AND ITS RELATION TO MODERN THOUGHT.

BY L. J. BLOCK.

It would seem that Philosophy has fallen on evil days. Once the undisputed queen of the sciences, and recognized law-giver in the realm of the Knowable, she appears now to occupy a region from which the buoyant life and fruitful energy of the times have receded, sending solitary and confused echoes into her expanse of loneliness, sad and muffled reminders of departed glories and extinguished authorities. The world-embracing fantasy of deeply brooding India, multitudinous in strangely commingled creations of spirit and nature, afforded her a harborage of mystical and cloudy supremacy; mother of nations, and mythologies, and world-comprehensions, India could not be other than philosophic. Memnonian Egypt—turning her colossal-statued front to the sunrise, and responsive to the earliest influence of the morning radiance, symbol of upturned humanity to the permeating and moulding Universal Thought, which converts all things into its own everlasting similitude and reflection—was, throughout her life and history, but a philosophic meditation on Death and Immortality. And radiant Greece—the genuine and joyous youth of the world, mankind's first recognition of itself as the solution of the riddles propounded by the abyss of potencies that engirt him, that exquisite equipoise of soul and sense which is the birth of beauty and its perfect embodiment—found the study of Universal Ideas as noble a pursuit as the disintegration of nature into abstract elements, which have no subsistence outside of the ideas which underprop and vivify them. Through the gloom which domed the welter and tumult of the *Middle Age*, that second chaos from whose throes and anguish was born the leagued independence of modern nationalities, shone two lights, as the sun and moon thereof, Religion and the Philosophy of the Schoolmen.

But we of the enlightenment and illumination have changed all that. We have discovered reality, and turned our faces away from the subjective phantasmagoria that deceived our misguided forefathers. Sensuous certitude and the abstract classifications

of science have put to flight the winged and mist-clad idealities of philosophy. Science has encamped on the very battle-field from which her elder sister has retreated in scorn, and haughtily triumphs in a conflict on which the one antagonist disdains to enter.

But, after all, so-called Positive Thought and the supporters of the gospel of limitation are not altogether assured that their victory is final and absolute. That steady splendor and typical manifestation of recent English philosophic tendencies, G. H. Lewes, whose spiritual transfusion into the life and work of the greatest of modern novelists modified her latest creations not wholly to their artistic completeness and wholesomeness of significance, finds himself necessitated to quote as introductory of his attempted systematic exposition of his world-view, "Problems of Life and Mind," the following words of his fellow-doubter, Stuart Mill, from whom such utterances are as little to be expected as from himself: "England's thinkers are again beginning to see, what they had only temporarily forgotten, that the difficulties of Metaphysics 'lie at the root of all Science; that these difficulties can only be quieted by being resolved, and that, until they are resolved, positively whenever possible, but at any rate negatively, we are never assured that any knowledge, even physical, stands on solid foundations.'"

It is indeed so. All science terminates in problems whose solution lies alone in the gift of divine philosophy. The constitution of matter, the interaction of forces, theories of heat and explanations of light, the relations of brain-structure and thought-interfusion, the origin of life and the fundamental aspects of the evolution-hypothesis, thrust the reason at last into the domain which pure speculation holds in right indefeasible and inalienable. The admirable monograph of Judge Stallo, recently published, has shown how inadequate is the thought of science, for the clearing up of the difficulties itself has met face to face in the inevitable process of its development.

And, *pace* Stuart Mill and the rest, a negative solution is an impossibility. The doctrine of the limitedness of thought, in what form soever presented, is so beset with difficulties and contradictions that one must hold it in ignorance of its complications, or in sheer despair, as a drowning man catches at straws. There is no direction in which Mind is so limited as in this of its own limitedness. Indeed, its limitation here is so marked that it cannot

even perceive it except by the extraordinary procedure of shutting its eyes to the whole subject intended to be envisaged. In this case it is only the blind who see. How could Mind set a limit to itself without transcending that limit? The very act, being continent of the limit, constitutes a totality of which limitation is only an antithetical phase. How can we *not* know a beyond which we know as limiting us, or how can we know ourselves as limited without knowing the limitary potencies which render it possible that we should be limited at all? It is impossible for thought to posit a beyond which shall limit it, and yet say in the same breath that the beyond is unknowable: for the beyond is as much a relative to thought, and is truly limited by thought, and therefore determined in its nature and essence by it, as thought is finited and circumscribed by the posited Unknowable. Surely it is a manifest contradiction for knowing to affirm that which is *per se* unknowable. We may affirm that our knowledge is inadequate, that subjects of investigation have not been fully fathomed, that the Universe is exhaustless to the restless research of man, but that the energy of knowing should demonstrate its hopeless incapacity to know—never. The supposititious Unknowable, when exposed to the relentless alchemy of reason, vanishes into the merest vapors of abstraction and “leaves not a rack behind.” Moreover, the upholders of the merely relative knowing claim at least one knowledge as absolute, viz., that all knowing is relative; this, by an extraordinary inconsistency, is held as absolute certitude; but to some mercilessly logical Hume of the future such a position will show itself to be utterly untenable, and the abyss of complete negation and skepticism will again engulf the so-called exact sciences as well as the results of pure speculation. Perhaps this consequence has already come.

But just here is the transition to genuine thinking and the proof of the reality and absoluteness of knowledge. If Thought posits itself and the beyond itself in an integrating unitary act, the antithesis falls within it, and the whole of the knowable resides within the sphere of its regulative laws and constitutive exploits. Thought projects itself over against itself, and the act of diremptive projection is at the same time the act of self-recovery in completed self-recognition. To imagine something outside of this total process of universal spirit, a mysterious and forever inaccessible

force, a marvellous *Ding-an-sich*, as Kant phrases, a twilight obscurity of potency to which may be relegated at will all the great problems of human life and destiny, a modern Limbo differing from the Miltonic one, being no receptacle for faded follies, delirious delusions, exploded hypotheses, but a prison-house wherein to lock from sight and influence our aspirations to know what we are, our faith in personal responsibility, on which is based all goodness and freedom, our glimmering apperceptions of the infinitude of our destiny ; in short, everything that makes it worth our while to be and do, is only to allow the intrusion of the imagination into the realm of the reason. Imagination has deluded philosophy with many a fiction, and with none more remorselessly than with this of the thing in-itself, out of relation and incapable of determination. That which is out of relation is unknowable, says Herbert Spencer ; we may add that it cannot be at all, as life is as much an intertexture of relations as knowledge. *Entia non multiplicanda præter necessitatem* is an excellent logical maxim, and against such logical exorcism the vapid and tongueless ghost of the thing-in-itself has not a single self-contradictory syllable to utter.

Universal Thought establishes a totality of relations which persist within its self-constituting medium, and, as universal product, are identical with its creative potencies. This totality presents itself in three aspects: First, as primordial thought of itself, or God ; secondly, as essential representation of the full circle of Thought's potentialities, or the Universe ; thirdly, as the organic unity of these opposites in an everlasting perfection of life, in which we "live, and move, and have our being." This is the God whom we all ignorantly worship, and whom Philosophy declares unto us. This is the being which Plato establishes as the foundation of his system in the great dialogue of the Parmenides, and which he there paradoxically describes as both being and not being ; this is the *ἡ νοήσεως νόησις*, the thought which thinks itself, with which Aristotle concludes his *Metaphysics* ; this is the ineffable First Cause of Proclus, which is superessential and wholly defecated from the worlds that depend from it ; this is the *ens realissimum* of the Schoolmen, the substance of Spinoza, the *Indifferenz* of Schelling, and the *Idee* of Hegel. Here all the great thinkers converge ; such is the outcome of the History of Philosophy.

Into the atmosphere and comprehension of this highest sphere of Truth penetrate the three great teachers and refiners of Mankind—Art, Religion, Philosophy. Art manifests this most real of realities and most ideal of idealities to the race through the medium of sensuous forms; Religion reveals it in mythic narrative as the essential groundwork of all consciousness, and the indwelling spirit and energy of all character; Philosophy seizes it as the imminent self-realizing idea of the world and history, an organic totality combining all knowing and being, all cognition and life, all potentiality and realization, the timeless and spaceless synthetic unity, wherein all history and astronomy are shrivelled up as flax in the fire, or rather *aufgehoben*, to use a Hegelian technicality, or held in solution as a solid substance in some chemical mixture of liquids. Such a comprehension of the Universe could not be merely a subjective creation of the individual mind; this is not *my* thought or *your* thought; it is thought universal, thinking itself, which reflects itself in you or me because it can only come to itself, and reveal its inmost principle, by its infinite self-reflections, which are the countless human souls whose pilgrimage is toward a goal, obscure only from an exceeding splendor of light. Surely in this comprehension there is enough of mystery to satisfy those who appear to be much alarmed lest the miracle and strangeness of existence should be all explained, and the monotony of too much understanding should weary us with its too crystalline purity of circumambient ether. Life ascends from knowledge to knowledge, and its peak and summit are the mid-efulgence of the sun; not a nebulous Ginnunga Gap, frost-bound and ice-clad, where all things are whirled upon and against each other in measureless and inextricable confusion. All real thinking is universal thinking, not individual thinking. The great discoveries in science and metaphysics were, so to speak, in the air before they were enunciated; usually they are made simultaneously by various workers in the same field, with no possible shadow of co-operation. Had Newton, and Leibnitz, and Hegel not lived, their great systems would have been developed by other minds; we do not possess thought; much rather does it possess us, and in its self-revelation we become cognizant of objective verity. The unity of scientific investigation could not be maintained by a host of isolated and uncommanded workers; science is a unity from the beginning;

that unity captains the array of toilers at every moment, and discloses the hoards of buried truth in the rocky bowels of the universe. Truth, not merely relative to us, but the invincible gold—that is the medium of interchange between the intellects and souls of men, and the palpable demonstration that the nations are of one blood and kin to what is deepest and noblest in the unfathomed scheme of things.

The attitude of thought toward this infinite reality is fourfold. Thought at first accepts its own conclusions with a certain *naïveté* and unquestioning faith. Speculation is primarily not beset with timidities or critical examinations and re-examinations. The fundamental principle assumed or found is unhesitatingly used as a solvent for the facts of nature and history. Systems are constructed, and their defence bristles with the defiance of assertion upon assertion. This first attitude of thought to the objective world is dogmatic, and wanting in genuine method. But opposing systems emerge into view with formidable swiftness and completeness, and an argumentative settlement of these disputes seems an impossibility. Disputation discovers constant support for the accepted alternative in the depths of either consciousness, and victory refuses to settle upon either standard. The way is cleared for the transition to the second attitude of thought toward objective verity.

Here criticism commences, but of a wholly external and separatist tendency. The essential duality pervasive of all thinking springs into bold and appalling relief. The antitheses of the permanent and the transient, of rest and motion, of thought and being, of the subjective and objective, of the potential and the realized, of freedom and necessity (the catalogue may be indefinitely extended), furnish a shifting and bewildering labyrinth of apparent uncertainties from which the so-called common-sense mind recoils. An abstract monism, whether scientific or metaphysical, affords no refuge in this storm of colliding contradictions; if we plant ourselves upon matter, the explanation of spirit, like the ghost of the murdered Banquo, will confront us in the mid-bustle and heyday of our carnival; if we assume spirit, the atomic theory of matter hurls its dust upon us, and is like to put out our eyes; if we talk of an excluded middle or intermediate, and grant validity to either side of the antithesis, we are tossed for reiterated impale-

ments from one to the other horn of the dilemma until we are fain to find peace and breath in a confession of hopeless ignorance and established skepticism. We become disciples of the great Englishman, Hume, and are satisfied that nothing is to be known and nothing is to be done.

But at this stage the third aspect of thought intervenes, and saves us from ruin. The doctrine of the strict interdependence of facts and ideas, the impossibility of predicating this without that, the discovery that explicit acceptance and strenuous defence of one view bases upon the implicit acknowledgment of diverse and even contrary truth, forces us upon the dialectical procedure, of which so many dialogues of Plato are consummate and imperishable examples. The dialectical movement is a necessity of thought, and has emerged into greater or less prominence in every great philosophical era. Plato is the dialectician *par excellence* of antiquity. Socrates, with true Athenian urbanity, takes for granted the point of view claimed by his interlocutor, and, by a series of adroitly contrived questionings, compels him to recognize the presuppositions of his thought, the relations and priorities, without which his thought would be unthinkable, and often ends by landing him in a confession of validity in the opinion he began the discussion by antagonizing. This is the famous Socratic irony, no fantastical play of idle acumen, alert for the detection of incoherencies, but an essential procedure of real thinking.

The dialectical point of view, however, is not wholly positive. The categories here swim in a Bacchant maze of transmutation, and proceed from nowhere to nowhither, or rather from everywhere to everywhither. Dialectics must rise to the height of the organic idea, the unity, as Hegel says, of comprehension and reality. The elucidation of the organic idea, its necessary phases and their interdependence, is the business and talk of philosophy. Say what we may, do what we will, we cannot escape the fate of reasoning beings; and reason, herself an organic unity, can be satisfied with no lesser principle as the explanation and reason of what is only the summit and perfection of all reasoning processes.

These four phases of speculation are illustrated with singular clearness in the history of Greek thought. With Thales begins a period of genuine philosophizing. His fundamental principle is of course a material one, and there is no effort at systematic expo-

sition. The world of nature, with its infinite potencies and mutable forms, is, nevertheless, one spectacle, and thought rejoices in the effort to find unity underlying all this diversity. Various systems of philosophy arise: the Pythagorean, with its primal postulate of number or proportion, and the Eleatic, which carries abstraction to its extreme verge of pure being. With Parmenides, venerable and majestic prototype of the great thinkers, nothing is but the permanent, the moveless, undetermined, immutable one. The contradiction here is apparent; the phenomenal and transitory may be ejected from the abstract developments, but reality stubbornly refuses to be argued out of existence. The great problem of ancient speculation rises above the horizon: the reconciliation of the permanent and the transitory, the one and the many, the unchangeable and the ineffable, with the mutable and expressible, of being and non-being. With the Eleatics terminates one movement of this antithesis; the world of sensuous apprehension had disappeared on being subjected to the alembic and crucible of the philosophers; in defence of it arises Heraclitus with his doctrine of the becoming. Not the one is, but the many are; not the stable and fixed, but the eternally changing. You cannot put your foot in the same stream twice. Against the abstraction of unity Heraclitus sets up the abstract multiplicity. As Thales called his first "water," calm, equable expanse, so Heraclitus calls his first "fire," restless, flickering, fantastical. The chasm is sought to be bridged by subsequent thinkers in various ways—by the Atomists in a materialistic, by Anaxagoras in an idealistic way. But in this clash of conflicting opinions Philosophy had lost its primal naïve, dogmatic tone; it was thrust back on itself in a reflection on its method and process. The sun of the Sophists had arisen.

The Sophists led the skeptical opinion of the times. The faith in the traditional deities of the land had been shaken, and the prevalent looseness of morals was either a cause or effect of the unsettled condition of speculative thought. Logical subtleties, convincing demonstrations of both sides of a hypothesis, exaltation of the individual above the universal, justification of personal whim against the rational necessity of established law and governance, were the disorder of the day. Protagoras formulated the prevailing creed in his dictum that "the man is the measure of the uni-

verse"; be it understood "the man," not "man"; the individual, not the community. This negative phase of Greek thought terminates in Socrates and his disciple and expounder Plato.

The *πρὸς στῶ* from which Socrates moved the ancient world is the conception of the Good; no subjective whim, no empirical realization of wish or desire, but the unity of will in the individual and moral law in the universe. The Sophists had emphasized empirical subjectivity, *my* will or *your* will, as limited earth-born creatures, denizens of time and space, and assailed by hosts of merely physical wants and cravings; Socrates emphasized absolute subjectivity, the will of the world-spirit or the gods, whose necessity is eternally realized in the institutions of the world, and whose freedom is absolute obedience to its self-constitutive laws. But the standpoint of Socrates is essentially dialectical, and in some sense negative. Part of his business is to destroy traditional moralities out of which even the semblance of life had departed; he comes not to bring peace, but a sword. Positive, that is, constructive philosophy, no longer dogmatic but critical, and conscious of its method, begins with Plato, forerunner and teacher of the greatest mind of antiquity, Aristotle.

The dramatic character of the Platonic writings allies itself very closely with the Socratic method of teaching. Science and philosophy advance by slow degrees to the stage of systematic exposition; they are at first mythologic and poetic, and only after many results have been achieved does the need of a simple though prosaic fashion of presentation make itself felt. The Platonic dialogues occupy a middle ground between poetical expounders of metaphysical subtleties, like Parmenides and Empedocles, important fragments of whose poems are yet extant, and dispassionate writers, like Aristotle, with whom scientific accuracy is a paramount consideration. The form of dialogue is here no external assumption of an imaginary enrobement, for the sake of increased attractiveness and heightened charm, as Savage Landor insinuates in that superb conversation supposed to have transpired between Plato and Diogenes, but the inevitable draperies in which philosophy at that epoch and under those conditions must by natural and necessary process walk clothed and resplendent. The dialectical movement of thought was still not wholly freed in conception from its concrete exemplifications, although the later dialogues lose much

of the dramatic coloring, and the long and laboriously explanatory speeches obscure the interlocutors into semi-invisibility.

Nothing, surely, can surpass the charm of the earlier dialogues. With a foreground of the smooth *Ægean* Sea, under the marvellous blue skies of Greece, and within the nestle and shadow of plane-trees or olive-groves, a company of friends meet to discuss the high themes of virtue, or fortitude, or temperance. The urbane conversation flows through shadow of profundity and shine of humor unto a predetermined outlet, often an arm of the infinite ocean, that roars and whitens beyond; but the current is so gracious, the movement is so gentle, that all seems a discovery to which a happy chance or favoring gods have led us. The negative outcome of many dialogues is only apparent; the positive conclusions glimmer as through a veil, unformulated, but stimulants of awakening thought and growing reason.

The central figure in these earlier dialogues is Socrates. He is the principal speaker, the incomparable disputant, the embodiment of wisdom. Socrates, the historic individual, formulated no system; for physical and metaphysical speculations he exhibited decided distaste, not to say aversion; the ethical problem was the one which supremely interested him. There is no Socratic philosophy, but a Socratic life and discipline. To emulate his example, to reproduce his virtues, to assimilate unto his lofty and serene character, became the labor and endeavor of his listeners and followers. Such a life lent itself easily, or perhaps necessitated, an ideal and semi-mythical treatment. In the Platonic dialogues he appears with mien and lineaments more than human. He is the ideal manhood walking the streets of Athens, and radiating divinest influence on all who come within the potent sphere of his personality. All knowledge shines in his eyes, all goodness resides in his words. Most gloriously is he compared in the *Symposium* to those statues of satyrs, which, being opened, disclose golden images of the gods.

In the more speculative dialogues, however, Socrates occupies an inferior place, or disappears altogether. In the *Parmenides*, the venerable and venerated sage, whose name gives title to the piece, defends a position from which, strange to say, he would have revolted in life. In the *Sophist*, that bewildering maze of tenuous abstractions, a certain mysterious Eleatic stranger conducts

the argument to its fitting and convincing close. In the *Laws* the main burden of exposition falls upon an unnamed Athenian; and even in the *Symposium* the ultimate deliverance is attributed by Socrates to the Theban Diotima. With deepening insight, Plato assumed a more or less critical attitude toward his great friend and master.

The dialogues most readily divide themselves into four classes. Into the vexed question of a genetic and internally articulated arrangement of the dialogues I shall not here enter; nor does it seem to me a matter of paramount importance whether they be grouped by threes or fours. The division of philosophy into four parts, one of Plato's great discoveries, which has become one of the conventionalities of thought, and whose importance we, who have grown up under its sway, are therefore likely to underestimate, affords the basis of classification. The dialogues are propædeutical, or introductory, logical, physical, ethical. Under the last section must be included the discussions of Beauty, which to Plato is only the visibility of the Good. No man escapes the spirit of his time; if he antagonizes it, his character and work reflect his struggle, and receive their prevailing determination from it. The great man consummates all the endeavor and achievement of his land and period, and sets sail in the fragile bark of his thought from the ports and cities of the known out into the mist and darkness of the unknown. Many of the dialogues are polemical in their nature. Against the Eleatic abstraction of being or the one, that which is without distinction or determination, a kind of Greek anticipation of the modern Unknowable, the Stranger in the *Sophist* demonstrates the necessity of not being, or the many. The Protagoras, the Gorgias, the Euthydemus, are levelled against the Sophists, a class of persons who, with Plato, are constantly universalized representation of the essentially misleading and false, whether of form or content, on speculative thought. The rehabilitation of the Sophists by the historian Grote seems, to some extent, a matter of supererogation; doubtless, many of them were very estimable men. In Plato, they belong to the ideal framework of his structure; the real Gorgias is no more delineated than the real Socrates; as the one is incarnate wisdom, the others are incarnate opposition to the true and absolute. The portrait of the Sophists is for all time; they are present with us as with Plato.

Of the propædæutical or introductory dialogues I have already sufficiently spoken. In the logical dialogues the main interest resides in the theory of universal and necessary ideas. This theory has been travestied by grave and laborious misapprehension without stint or limit; the unguarded expressions of a discoverer have been distorted into every form of absurdity; purely modern blunders have been laid at the door of the philosopher, and his students have divested his threshold of the noisome litter, time and again, to no purpose. The dispute about the Platonic ideas is no dead issue; it is more than the echo of thunder that has vanished into the nothingness of sound; it is a living controversy of to-day, and Modern Science clasps hands with Plato across the centuries and announces with him the reality and veracity of the necessary laws of the world. The ideas are not abstractions hypostatized as spiritual things referred to some fine ether, who knows where, and operating on the world in some wholly incomprehensible fashion; they are not even categories, as the term is ordinarily understood; but they are those universal processes of soul and things, which are no figments of the thinking reason, but the actuality, as we know and find it. We speak of the reign of law; Plato spoke of the reign of Ideas. That there are universal laws of things is the wonderful discovery of the great philosopher; that these laws are no dead mechanic formalities, but living, real processes, and indeed the only real living process, in whose eternal self-returning movement all things and events are noduses, so to speak, or concretions, is the doctrine divulged in these writings. And Modern Science accepts this realism, and can have no part nor lot with a shallow nominalism that affirms the so-called laws of nature to be merely groupings of phenomena, set up more or less for individual behoof and convenience.

With the doctrine of Ideas the doctrine of Reminiscence is in close accord. Here, too, the mythologists and rapid readers, the Sir William Hamiltons and such like devourers of great books, in defiance of the principles of intellectual digestion, have made havoc with the intent of the seer, and foisted on his paternity their own crude and misbegotten progeny. He who runs cannot read Plato any more than Kant, or Hegel, or Herbert Spencer. The magnificent allegories of the *Phædo* have been taken with a perverse literalness, and the alert imagination has busied itself with the preg-

nant problem in what sort of a space and time, in what spiritual configuration of geography souls may have had abiding habitation before like meteors they flashed their way to the earth we know. But the doctrine of reminiscence is a part of Plato's doctrine of knowing. To know reality we must know the Ideas; but Ideas are not only the substance of things, but the substance of the knowing process as well. Truth is not created by Thought, but is imminent in the procedure of Thought to its discovery. Consciousness contains, latent or implicit, the truth which becomes clear by its deepening development; we may therefore be said to re-collect or recover the verities of which we had been obliterated in the earlier and inadequate stages of our knowing. Be it said here that this is no discourse on "innate ideas" or "intuitions" of the Scotch philosophers. Plato's *aperçu* of the immortality of the soul is now not far to seek. The Ideas being immanent in the process of knowing, and the Ideas being the eternal substance of the world, immortality is assured by an ascent into the realm of Ideas. Hence the statement ascribed to Plato that philosophers alone are immortal; but the statement is misleading. Immortality is not a gift thrust into the lap of every one, whether he would or no; it is an achievement wrought by the soul in its flight toward the Good. The destructibility or indestructibility of the individual soul is a subject of minor importance; an eternity of sameness in vice or the monotonies of our daily living is less desirable than the blessedness of rest after struggle and failure. Immortality is only worth having if it means growth in wisdom, profounder faithfulness in the service of the Good; but Plato nowhere intimates that the probationary experiences of the soul are limited; the opportunities of making the successful endeavor are infinite.

The physics of Plato are contained in the obscurest and most difficult of his writings, the "Timæus." They are mainly interesting as extraordinary anticipations of the results of modern investigation. The wave theories of heat and light; the circulation of the blood; the polarities involved in the crystallization of the chemical elements; the division of substances into solids, liquids, gases, ethers, expressed by him under the terms earth, water, air, fire; the Schelling dictum that spirit sleeps in nature, dreams in the animal, is awake in man, with others needless to be specified—are found here briefly or *in extenso*. The book is said to be a revision of an

older Pythagorean writing, and the fantastical Pythagorean number-language seems extremely difficult of satisfactory interpretation.

The ethics of Plato and his idea of the State or Republic are synonymous. With him morals are only concretely managed as realized in the institutions of the world. Abstract Right is only the formal universality of law dirempted from the institutional organism, whose process is its life and reality. He was a reactionist in politics and a stay-at-home in relation to political duties. The democracy of his time seemed to him hopelessly corrupt, and doomed to a speedy extinction. His effort was to disclose an ethical system, which should meet the wants of his nation and forestall the impending ruin. The freedom of the individual seemed to him fraught with the gravest danger to the commonwealth; Alcibiades had been a fellow-pupil of Socrates. Hence the organization of the Platonic State—philosophers as rulers, the strong and able-bodied as defenders, the remaining mass as farmers and producers. Hence, also, the four so-called cardinal virtues—wisdom, the virtue of the rulers; fortitude, the virtue of the soldiery; temperance, the virtue of the laborers; and justice, the virtue that assigns to each its part and unites them all in harmonious reciprocity. The individual having disappeared in the general weal, the denial of the right to private property and the community in marriage follow as necessary implications. Education is an essential business of the State, that each may fulfil his separate function, although each is at the same time to be a reflection of the whole. These views must not be confounded with the socialism of to-day; this is the modern democratic movement run mad, while the Republic and Laws of Plato are the intensest reaction against the upheaving and mischievous tendencies of similar ebullitions of his time.

The Platonic philosophy, considered as a whole, has two characteristics rarely united and apparently contradictory. On the one hand, it is dialectical, methodical, scientific; on the other, it refuses formulation, wanders at will through the caprices of dramatic dialogue, abounds in mysticism. The great rôle which it has played in the philosophical movement of the planet reproduces accurately these attributes. Standing, as it does, at the great confluence of tendencies, it appeals with singular power to the most

diverse capacities of intellect and soul. Science and myth, clearness and mysticism, unite in it to fashion the art-product of philosophy. For once sense and reason cease their quarrel, and the white statue of philosophy is the result, the "one thing perfect in this hasty world."

Moreover, all genuine philosophical syntheses have their distinctive functions in the evolution of the all-embracing world-philosophy. Philosophical systems connect themselves by pedigree and inheritance, and this aristocracy denies admittance to the multitude of pretenders, and recognizes its own by infallible signs and portents. Here is a hierarchy older and more venerable than any other, serene in the possession of unshakable power, and quite content to let the outer clamor pursue its windy ways to the certain issue of its self-annihilation. Much that is ordinarily called philosophy has no claim to the title, and the historians of philosophy have given ultimate verdict against the vociferations of many a great reputation. One of the problems of history has been to discover the real line of thinkers, and thus discover the real movement of thought. Schwegler, for instance, denies a place to Auguste Comte; and what he would say to some more recent developments is not difficult to surmise.

The movement of the world-thought may be said to have three phases or periods, which may be termed, respectively, objective, subjective, and universal. The ancient philosophical movement was objective; the modern and mediæval, subjective; the movement of the future, already begun and fairly outlined, will be universal. In ancient objective thought, mind and matter stood in no antithesis such as we predicate; the diremption between thought and being, which makes so great a figure with us, existed only in an implicit, undeveloped fashion; to the ancients, knowledge was the union of subject and object, and their great problem was to reconcile the permanent, the one, the good, with the transitory, the many, the caprice of the individual. With Plato, to know was to be, and to be was to know; the nightmare of the empirical Berkeleyan idealism would have been to him inconceivable. The emphasis of the subject as opposed to the object belongs to modern thought and life, and their reconciliation, without detriment to either, is the task yet to be performed. Philosophy will then return to the freedom and joyousness of its earlier speculations.

The place of Plato in the objective period of thought, if not the highest, is yet, perhaps, the one of largest influence. It is not unlike the position of Immanuel Kant in the thought-world which is our dwelling and environment. In him all streams of speculation converge; from him they proceed again with deeper, wider currents, and in newer, nobler directions. In the Neo-platonic schools that arose after the completion of the encyclopedic Aristotelianism we see that return to the earlier thinker which invariably ensues with the failure of a generation to grasp and comprehend the deepest truth vouchsafed to it. These scholars and disciples of Plato diverge as they relate themselves to the mystical or dialectical phase of the master's work. The ecstasy or intuition of Plotinus, that swoon of the soul out of the multiplicities of sense-perception into essential oneness and acquaintance with the universe as a totality, belongs to the mysticism of Plato; the triads of Proclus, each universal and inclusive of all the others, and yet of unequal comprehension, so that they form a hierarchy from the superessential and ineffable one to the shapes and principles of the corporeal and mundane sphere, belong to the logic of Plato. But throughout the Neo-platonic schools the religious spirit is regnant; hence their prevailing mythologic tendencies. The effort is heroically made to find the profoundest of significance in the religious myths of their race; the triads of Proclus, a genuine result of free philosophic insight, receive from him mythic appellations, as Jupiter, Venus, Ceres, and the rest. The theological phase of ancient religion is fairly inaugurated. It is a time of ferment and intense activity; the Gnostic heresy is only a Neo-platonic explanation of the world; what remains of the ancient life, conscious dimly of its imminent doom, forges with restless eagerness in these varying systems of thought and commentaries on Plato's *Timæus* or *Theology*, weapons of offence and defence. It is to be again remarked that this seething activity proceeds from Plato, not Aristotle; the epoch is religious, not scientific.

Against this tumult of opinions and creeds Christianity arose in controversy. But in every intellectual conflict the vanquished is to some extent the victor. By its own inherent strength Christianity could not achieve all; her armor was welded and fashioned in Greek workshops, her sword was toughened and sharpened in Greek fires. Oriental monotheism was incapable of conquering the

Western world ; that was too abstract, too remote, too unvital, to persuade Greek or Teutonic barbarian. Before Christianity was competent to dissipate Neo-platonic heresies, she was obliged to take up those lofty reasonings into her own substance and convert them into her own fibre and constituency. St. Augustine is a convert from Platonism ; in his soul the Orient and Occident come to resplendent and fruitful nuptials. The union of Hebraism and Hellenism is consummated ; the new faith has received outer equipment and accoutreing, and is prepared to set forth on her career of victorious knight-errantry. It is thus that Platonism underprops and gives strength of arm to the new spirit that has come into the world. The mystical side of Platonism and constant usage of representing the pure Ideas in mythic guise and habili-ment give it especial aptitude to enter alliance with religious con-ceptions and symbols ; and the mystics of subsequent ages have, with marked unanimity, gone back to Plato as their source and fountain-head.

Thus Christianity, in the triumph over Platonism, was conquered in her turn. With the complete establishment of the new religion and the annunciation of her circle of dogmas arises an activity, great and intense, within the strict limits she has set. Upon this activity authority has imprinted its seal. Important and far-reach-ing as are the questions discussed, they yet remain within the pale of promulgated prescriptions ; they are properly theologic, not philosophic ; for theology differs from philosophy in this, that the former moves within the charmed circle of the faith, while the latter claims the infinite realm of freedom for her own ; her dis-tinctions do not come to her from without, but are part and parcel of her life and purpose. The Schoolmen based their subtle specu-lations not upon Platonism, but Aristotelianism ; and the reason is not far to seek. In Aristotle, Platonism comes to a full con-sciousness of itself ; myth, and story, and dramatic coloring have vanished ; clear, prosaic, scientific exposition take their place. In the Schoolmen, likewise, Platonizing Christianity rises to an en-visagement of its significance and function ; the two great masters of "those who know" repeat that transmission of idealities which constitutes their internal bond and unity. But the corruption of a faith through plenitude of success and power reproduces in a measure the condition of its primal foundation and construction.

Mind returns upon a different and higher level to the effort of original pursuit and apprehension. The negative phase inherent in the dialectical movement of world-history subjects existing institutions and belief to a remorseless criticism of destruction, and the corresponding positive phase begins anew with mysticism and mystery. Even in the height and culmination of long-subsisting creeds the novel and alien spirit manifests its beginnings. Platonism emerges again as a guiding-star to men's souls and hearts, benighted in the glooms of Church lost to spiritual interests in the greedy lust for temporal power. The Florentine Academy, with Marsilio Ficino at its head, and the Platonizing Pico Mirandolo, are portents of the times; in England and Spain poets and philosophers abandoned the sterilities of scholasticism, and drank deep at the fountain which bubbles up bright and fresh amid the fadeless charms of the Old Academe; the "Faerie Queen" of Spenser is only Platonism set to the divinest music of English Poetry; and one has only to turn to Shakespeare's little-read "Troilus and Cressida" to see how far even purely logical speculations proved attractive to the poetic temperament of the Renaissance. But it is in Germany that the renewed study of Plato displays the noblest fruits; the great systems of Nicholas of Cusa and Meister Eckhart, the preaching of a mystic like Tauler, even such works intended for popular circulation, like the "De Imitatione" and the "Theologia Germanica," both in method and substance, owe more to Plato than any previous philosophy.

Then approaches the emancipation of philosophy. Thought demands absolute freedom; prescription, dogma, authority, are futile to impose their restrictions; nay, authority itself must validate its claims before that highest authority—Universal Reason. So-called axiomatic thinking affords no safeguard against the invasion of free speculation; axioms, intuitions like the remainder of authoritative doctrines, are frail barriers which the might of thought sweeps before it like straws. With Descartes, and Locke, and Voltaire, the right of speculation to be free was matter of profoundest interest; and no nobler heritage was ever left to posterity than this right which has become a commonplace to us. But this conflict is, after all, precursory to modern philosophy; that philosophy begins with the more recent positive thinkers. Plato in life preferred the retirement of literary seclusion to the

noisier and showier triumphs of a public career ; and, like his life, his thought has never been a lover of contest or tumult. As a soldier in the battle of freedom he makes no great figure ; but in the securer and more lasting successes of peace he finds a congenial element and sphere of influence. When the smoke and dust of battle have disappeared down the winds, philosophers are discovered again perusing the exhaustless volumes of the Greek forerunner in the intellectual race. Hegel and his school owe a vast debt to Plato, and the Hegelianizing Frenchman, Cousin, is not behind the German in his study of the ancient and somewhat forgotten books of curious lore. Indeed, Hegel may be said to have re-discovered Plato, and no account of the latter's system yet made is comparable with the one to be found in Hegel's "History of Philosophy." In England, Coleridge, that mighty impulse and stimulant to thought, if fragmentary and inconsecutive in productiveness, reawakened the Platonic enthusiasm ; and the transcendental movement in New England, which found in Coleridge one of its great inspirers and illuminations, had much to do with the divine dialogues. I quote from Emerson : "He has indicated every eminent point in speculation. He wrote on the scale of the mind itself, so that all things have symmetry in his tablet. He put in all the past, without weariness, and descended into detail with a courage like that he witnessed in nature. One would say that his forerunners had mapped out each a farm, or a district, or an island, in intellectual geography, but that Plato first drew the sphere."

Moreover, up and down the ages are scattered devout disciples who have found intellectual sustenance and inexpressible solace in these writings. In solitude of spirit they have given their hours and days to the comprehension of this wisdom ; they have written their books, and sent them forth, secure in the conviction that they would reach the ear of those for whom they have been intended ; and even now are found readers who shake the dust, thick-accumulated dust, from the leaves of Henry More, or Sir Thomas Browne, or Norris, and find them fresher and more invigorating than many belauded prolusions of to-day. Where least expected, the Platonic seed seems blown by the continual wafture of the winds of destiny, and the plant springs up and blossoms in unmistakable beauty and likeness. In our own State, a heroic scholar,

Dr. H. K. Jones,¹ has made a synthesis of these writings, surprisingly subtle, and so distinctly original as to merit the epithet, American.

The title of Plato to the highest eminence cannot be disputed; he belongs to the lineage and order of the greatest of mankind. He accepted universal intelligence as veracious, and the only organ of veracity; he penetrated into the profoundest mysteries of thought, and was not deterred from speculations of boldest flight and longest wing; he well understood that an external limit to thought, in what form soever posited, was an unthinkable contradiction. His discoveries of the priority of the universal to the particular; of the imminence of truth in the necessary procedure of thought; of the self-recognizing reason as the substance of thought and things; of the four ascending grades of knowing, from the fluctuating and unseizable vagaries of sense to the permanent and inclusive ideas or processes, or universal laws of the rational part of the soul; of the self-evidencing method of thought, to which he gave the name that has become fixed, the dialectic, with his *aperçus* of the nature of the Good and Beauty, and of the immortality of the soul—remain as indestructible parts of that heritage of established and demonstrated reality which is now and must forever be the life of the race and the condition of its progress. At the great turning-points of history he has borne before advancing humanity the flambeau of inspiration that has made possible progress through the enveloping darkness; and I, for one, do not believe that his functioning is over. There is yet abundant work for the Platonic Philosophy to do, and, as in the past, it will be nobly done; the great thinker points forever to that realm of universal ideals, that philosophy, the spirit and beauty of all philosophies, which is at once the medium and potency of all life, and the solution of all problems. Over the portal of that realm, truly called Philosophy, he writes no legend of despair, and limitation, and nescience, but, in letters of imperishable flame, the inspiring, ennobling words: *Intrcite nam hic dei sunt*. Enter, for here are the Gods.

¹ Of Jacksonville, Illinois.